

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

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CENTRAL FAX CENTER

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**Listing of Claims:**

1. – 33. (canceled)

34. (previously presented) An auction method of determining a successful bidder, the auction method being executed in a server computer connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction method comprising the steps of:

a) transmitting, from the server computer, information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;

b) receiving, in the server computer, price information for determining a price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;

c) judging, in the server computer, whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay, for each bidder;

d) determining, in the server computer, a remaining bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in step c);

e) judging, in the server computer, that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder in step d);

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f) if it is judged that a competitive state does not occur in step e), determining, in the server computer, the remaining bidder as a successful bidder; and

g) if it is judged that a competitive state occurs in step e), increasing the auction price by a predetermined value and repeating steps c), d), and e).

35. (previously presented) An auction method in accordance with claim 34, wherein the price information includes a desired price with which a bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

36. (previously presented) An auction method in accordance with claim 34, further comprising the steps of:

h) determining, in the server computer, an abandoned bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged that the current auction price is higher than the price in step c); and

i) excluding the abandoned bidder.

37. (currently amended) An auction device of determining a successful bidder, the auction device being connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction device comprising:

~~a first module~~ first means for transmitting information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;

~~a second module~~ second means for receiving price information for determining a price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;

~~a third module~~ third means for judging whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay, for each bidder;

~~a fourth module~~ fourth means for determining a remaining bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in the third ~~module~~ means;

~~a fifth module~~ fifth means for judging that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder; and

~~a sixth module~~ sixth means for, if it is judged in the fifth ~~module~~ means that the competitive state does not occur, determining the remaining bidder as a successful bidder,

wherein, if it is judged in the fifth ~~module~~ means that the competitive state occurs, the third, fourth, and fifth ~~modules~~ means are repeatedly executed with the auction price increased by a predetermined value.

38. (currently amended) An auction device in accordance with ~~claim 36~~ claim 37, wherein the price information includes a desired price with which a bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

39. (currently amended) An auction device in accordance with ~~claim 36~~ claim 37, further comprising:

~~a seventh module~~ seventh means for determining an abandoned bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged in the third ~~module~~ means that the current auction price is higher than the price; and

~~an eighth module~~ eighth means for excluding the abandoned bidder.

40. (previously presented) An auction method of determining a successful bidder, the auction method being executed in a server computer connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction method comprising the steps of:

a) transmitting, from the server computer, information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;

b) receiving, in the server computer, order information for the product from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;

c) judging, in the server computer, for each bidder, whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than a price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product, based on the received order information;

d) determining, in the server computer, a remaining bidder who sent the order information based on which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in step c);

e) judging, in the server computer, that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder in step d);

f) if it is judged that the competitive state does not occur in step e), determining, in the server computer, the remaining bidder as a successful bidder; and

g) if it is judged that the competitive state occurs in step e), increasing the auction price by a predetermined value and repeating steps c), d), and e).

41. (previously presented) An auction method in accordance with claim 40, wherein the price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay is a sum total of a desired price with which the bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

42. (previously presented) An auction method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the order information includes the desired price and the acceptable price.

43. (previously presented) An auction method in accordance with claim 40, wherein the order information further includes a rule defining a condition for participating in the auction, and

wherein step c) judges whether the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay based on the rule for each bidder.

44. (previously presented) An auction method in accordance with claim 40, further comprising the steps of:

h) determining, in the server computer, an abandoned bidder who sent the order information by which it is judged that the current auction price is higher than the price in step c); and

i) excluding the abandoned bidder.

45. (currently amended) An auction device for determining a successful bidder, the auction device being connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction device comprising:

~~a first module~~ first means for transmitting information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;

~~a second module~~ second means for receiving order information from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;

~~a third module~~ third means for judging, for each bidder, whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than a price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product, based on the order information;

~~a fourth module~~ fourth means for determining a remaining bidder who sent the order information by which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in the third ~~module~~ means;

~~a fifth module~~ fifth means for judging that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder, and

~~a sixth module~~ sixth means for, if it is judged in the fifth ~~module~~ means that the competitive state does not occur, determining the remaining bidder as a successful bidder,

wherein, if it is judged in the fifth ~~module~~ means that the competitive state occurs, the third, fourth, and fifth ~~modules~~ means are repeatedly executed with the auction price increased by a predetermined value.

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46. (previously presented) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, wherein the price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay is a sum total of a desired price with which the bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

47. (previously presented) An auction device in accordance with claim 46, wherein the order information includes the desired price and the acceptable price.

48. (currently amended) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, wherein the order information further includes a rule defining a condition for participating in the auction, and

wherein the third ~~module~~ means judges whether the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay based on the rule for each bidder.

49. (currently amended) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, further comprising:

~~a seventh module~~ seventh means for determining an abandoned bidder who sent the order information by which it is judged in the third ~~module~~ means that the current auction price is higher than the price; and

~~an eighth module~~ eighth means for excluding the abandoned bidder.

50. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 34,  
wherein a plurality of products are auctioned and a plurality of successful  
bidders are determined in the auction method.

51. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 34,  
wherein the server computer holds the predetermined value.

52. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 34, further comprising  
the steps, in the server computer, of:  
reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;  
checking whether at least one bidder exists,  
determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,  
and  
further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the  
checking and succeeding steps.

53. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 35, further comprising  
the steps, in the server computer, of:  
reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;  
checking whether at least one bidder exists,  
determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,  
and  
further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the  
checking and succeeding steps,



wherein the server computer determines that the bidder exists when the auction price reaches the desired price of the bidder.

54. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 35, wherein, in the step e), whether the competitive state occurs or not is determined based on the amount of products to be auctioned and the sum of amounts of products that the bidders desire to purchase.

55. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 54, wherein, in the step e), if the total of (1) the sum of minimum desired amounts of bidders who are included in the bidders each having a nonzero desired amount and who do not purchase for an amount less than a minimum desired amount, (2) the number of bidders each having a minimum desired amount equal to zero, and (3) the number of bidders who purchase even if the amount is less than the minimum desired amount, is equal to or less than the remaining quantity of the products, the server computer determines that the competitive state does not occur.

56. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 37, wherein a plurality of products are auctioned and a plurality of successful bidders are determined.

57. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 37, further comprising means for holding the predetermined value.

58. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 37, further comprising seventh means for

reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;

checking whether at least one bidder exists,

determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,

and

further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the checking and succeeding process.

59. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 38, further comprising seventh means for

reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;

checking whether at least one bidder exists,

determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,

and

further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the checking and succeeding process,

wherein the seventh means determines that the bidder exists when the auction price reaches the desired price of the bidder.

60. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 37,

wherein the fifth means determines whether the competitive state occurs or not based on the amount of products to be auctioned and the sum of amounts of products that the bidders desire to purchase.

61. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 60,

wherein the fifth means determines that the competitive state does not occur if the total sum of (1) the sum of minimum desired amounts of bidders who are included in the bidders each having a nonzero desired amount and who do not purchase for an amount less than the desired amount, (2) the number of bidders each having a minimum desired amount equal to zero, and (3) the number of bidders who purchase even if the amount is less than the desired amount, is equal to or less than the remaining quantity of the products.

62. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 40,

wherein a plurality of products are auctioned and a plurality of successful bidders are determined in the auction method.

63. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 40,

wherein the server computer holds the predetermined value.

64. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 40, further comprising the steps, in the server computer, of:

reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;

checking whether at least one bidder exists,

determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,

and

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further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the checking and succeeding step.

65. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 41, further comprising the steps, in the server computer, of:

reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;

checking whether at least one bidder exists,

determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,

and

further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the checking and succeeding steps,

wherein the server computer determines that the bidder exists when the auction price reaches the desired price of the bidder.

66. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 40,

wherein, in the step e), whether the competitive state occurs or not is determined based on the amount of products to be auctioned and the sum of amounts of products that the bidders desire to purchase.

67. (new) An auction method in accordance with claim 66,

wherein, in the step e), if the total of (1) the sum of minimum desired amounts of bidders who are included in bidders each having a nonzero desired amount, (2) the number of bidders each having a minimum desired amount equal to zero, and (3) the number of bidders who purchase even if the amount is less than the minimum

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desired amount, is equal to or less than the remaining quantity of the products, the server computer determines that the competitive state does not occur.

68. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, wherein a plurality of products are auctioned and a plurality of successful bidders are determined.

69. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, further comprising means for holding the predetermined values.

70. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, further comprising seventh means for  
reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;  
checking whether at least one bidder exists,  
determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,  
and  
further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the checking and succeeding process.

71. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 46, further comprising seventh means for  
reducing the auction price if no bidder exists;  
checking whether at least one bidder exists,

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determining the existing bidder as a successful bidder if one bidder exists,  
and

further reducing the auction price if no bidder exists and repeating the  
checking and succeeding process,

wherein the seventh means determines that the bidder exists when the  
auction price reaches the desired price of the bidder.

72. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 45,

wherein the fifth means determines whether the competitive state occurs or  
not based on the amount of products to be auctioned and the sum of amounts of  
products that the bidders desire to purchase.

73. (new) An auction device in accordance with claim 72,

wherein the fifth means determines the competitive state does not occur if the  
total sum of (1) the sum of minimum desired amounts of bidders who are included in  
bidders each having a nonzero desired amount and who do not purchase for an  
amount less than a minimum desired amount, (2) the number of bidders each having  
a minimum desired amount equal to zero, and (3) the number of bidders who  
purchase even if the amount is less than the minimum desired amount, is equal to or  
less than the remaining quantity of products.